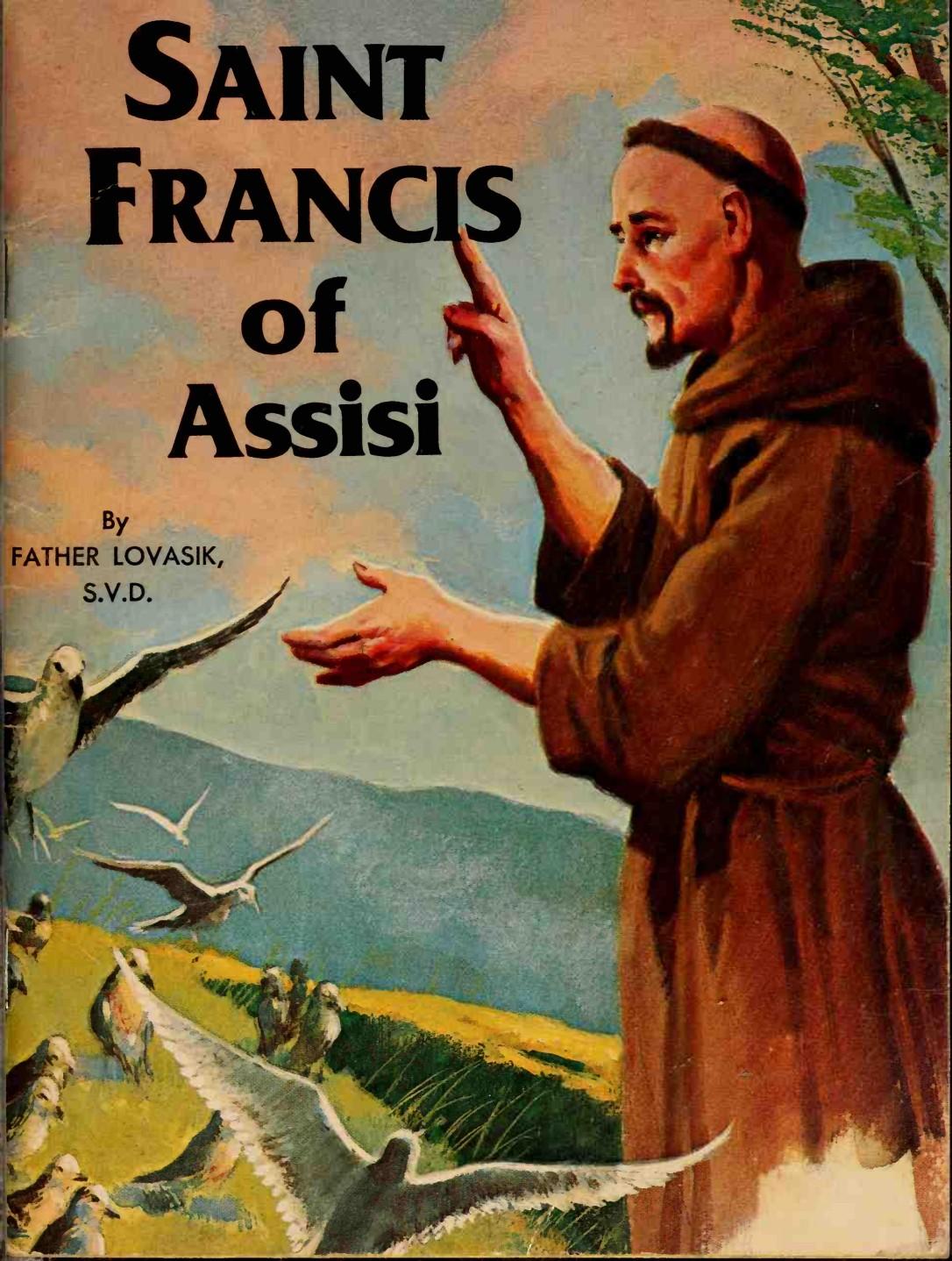
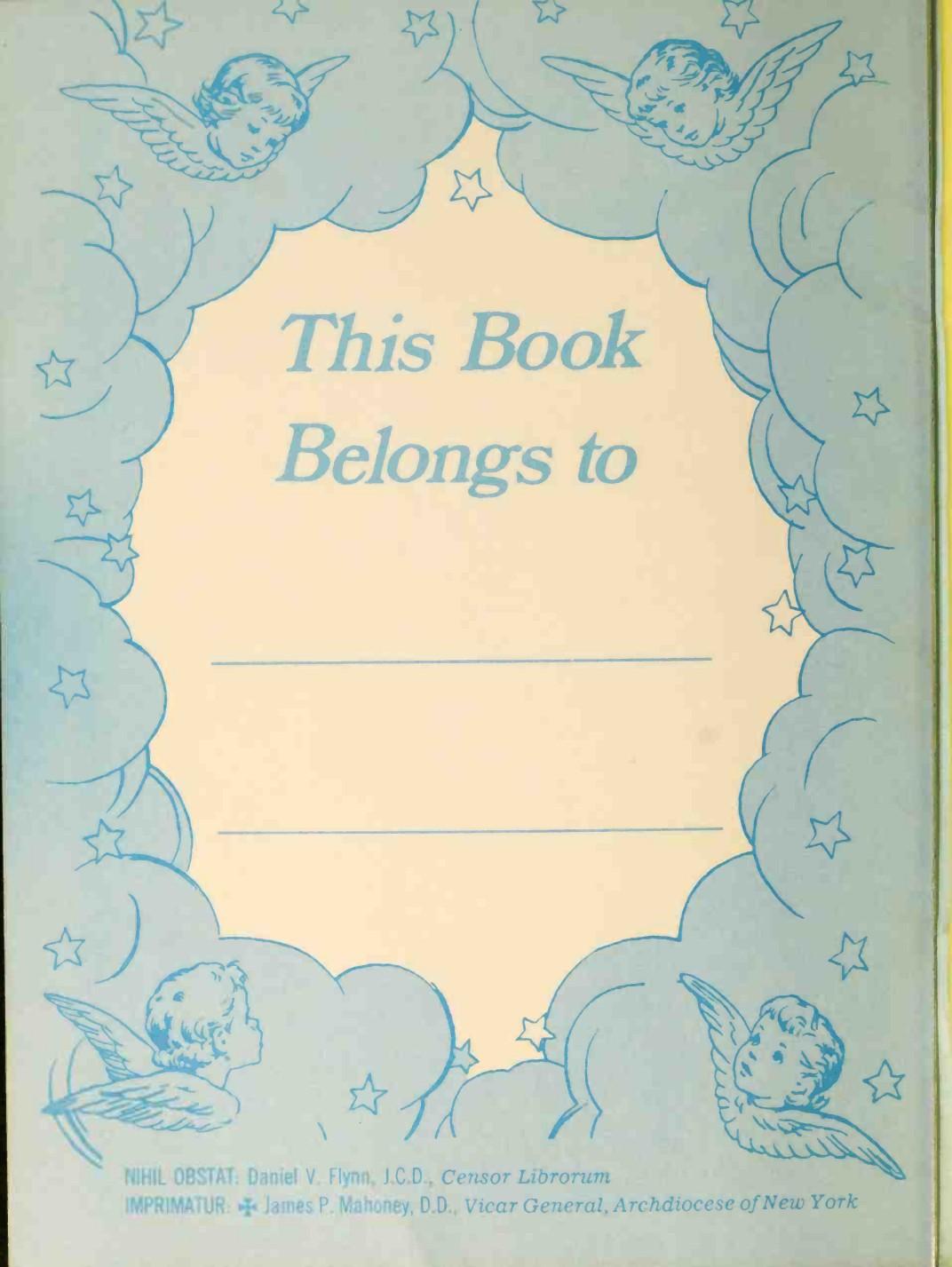


SAINT FRANCIS of Assisi

By

FATHER LOVASKI,
S.V.D.



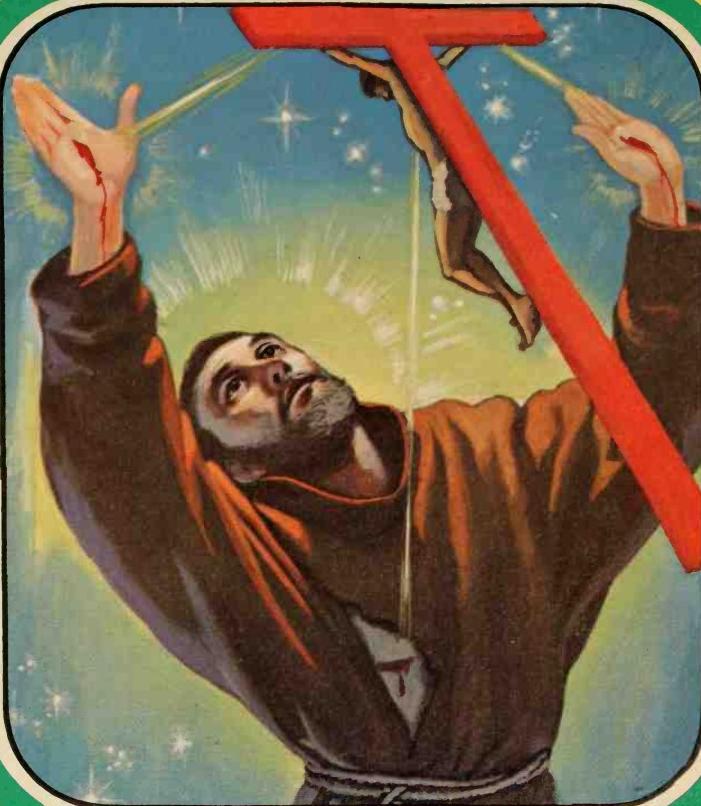


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SAINT FRANCIS of Assisi



By REV. LAWRENCE G. LOVASKI, S.V.D.
Divine Word Missionary

CATHOLIC BOOK PUBLISHING CO. New York

SAINT FRANCIS IS KNOWN TO ALL

THERE is hardly a Saint who is more known and loved by Catholics and non-Catholics alike than Saint Francis of Assisi.

His great aim in life was to find peace. He gave up the things of this world and found peace in God alone. The motto of his life was: "My God and my All!"

He loved God and all His creatures for the love of God. They were all brothers and sisters to him, children of the same Heavenly Father.

Saint Francis can help us to get closer to God and Jesus. By imitating him in his love for God and all creatures, we will imitate Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of All.





BIRTH OF SAINT FRANCIS

SAINT Francis was born in 1182 in Assisi, one of the oldest cities of Italy. His mother, Donna Pica, wanted to be like the Mother of God. She wanted her son to be born in a stable.

And that is what happened. She had to leave her beautiful bedroom and go to one of the stalls of her stable before her baby could be born. The first cradle of Francis was one of straw in a stable —like Jesus.



FRANCIS DREAMS OF BEING A KNIGHT OF GOD

DONNA brought up her son in the fear of God. She told him stories about brave knights in shining armor mounted on strong horses.

These stories filled Francis with a great desire to do noble things, and even to shed his blood for God as the knights did.

While helping his father in his shop one day, Francis refused alms to a beggar. But he was sorry, ran after him and gave the man a gift. He determined never to refuse anything asked of him in God's name.

FRANCIS ALONE WITH NATURE

AS FRANCIS grew older, he gathered around him many friends because he was rich and liked to have a good time. These young men spent their time eating and drinking till all hours.

He became a partner in his father's business and spent all his earnings for pleasure. But one day he became ill and had time to think.

When he regained his strength he took walks in the country, for he liked mountains, fields, and trees. He experienced sadness—but through this sadness God would draw him to Himself.





GOD CALLS FRANCIS

WHEN he was well, Francis traveled to the south of Italy with an army, hoping to become a famous knight. He was dressed in rich clothes and armor.

But he became ill. One night as he lay in bed he heard a voice asking where he wanted to go. "To Apulia to be a knight," he replied.

"Tell me, Francis," the voice continued, "who can help you more, the Lord or the servant?" Francis cried: "Lord, what do You want me to do?" He was told to go back home to find out. He left the next morning.

FRANCIS BEGINS A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

BACK home, Francis was again visited by the Lord while walking behind his friends one evening. His heart was filled with joy and peace.

One of his friends saw him and asked: "Why are you so quiet? Are you thinking of getting married?" "Yes," Francis said. "My bride is richer and more beautiful than any woman."

He called her Lady Poverty — because he was going to give up everything for a new life in Christ.



FRANCIS BECOMES A BEGGAR FOR CHRIST

FRANCIS now made up his mind to leave all for Christ. He made a pilgrimage to Rome to ask help from the Holy Father at St. Peter's.

When Francis left Saint Peter's Church, he met a beggar and exchanged clothes with him. He spent the rest of the day begging with the other poor people on the church steps.

After his return home, Francis was troubled. Why should he have to worry about clothes, money, or property? Did not Our Lord say: "Blessed are the poor in spirit"?





FRANCIS AND THE LEPER

ONE day Francis was out riding and he saw a leper. He wanted to ride away. But, filled with God's grace, he sprang from his horse, gave the leper money, and kissed him.

As Francis rode away, his heart beat with joy and he was filled with peace. He began to do this with other poor people, too.

Francis saw Jesus in each of these poor people. For Jesus had said: "As long as you did it for one of these, you did it for Me."

FRANCIS IS TOLD TO BUILD UP THE LORD'S HOUSE

FRANCIS used to go to San Damiano, a little chapel in the fields, where he prayed before a large crucifix over the altar.

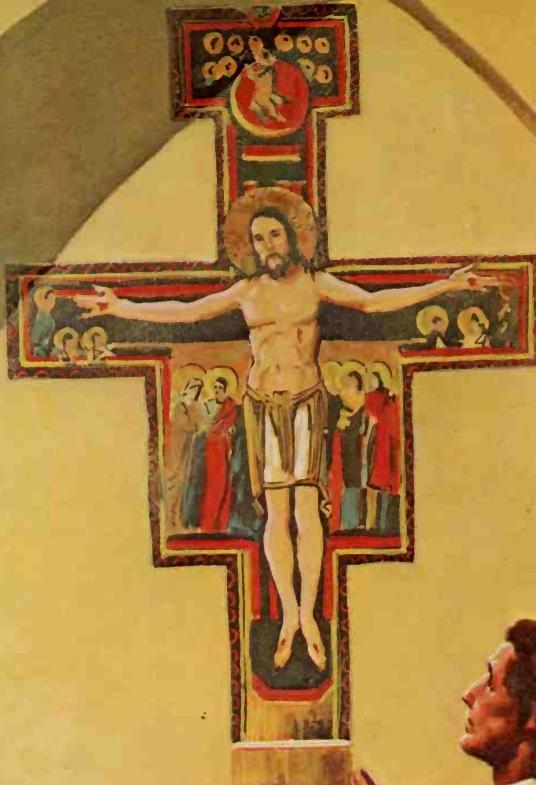
One day a voice came from the crucifix that could be heard only in his heart: "Go, Francis, and build up My house, for it is falling down."

Francis sold some goods from his father's shop and offered the money to the old priest at the church to rebuild it. The priest was afraid to take it. So Francis left the money on the window sill.

His father, Bernadone, went to look for him, but Francis hid in a cave. Bernadone returned to the shop with the money.

Francis prayed: "Most holy Lord, I want to love you. Dearest God, I have given up to you all my heart and my body, and I really want to do still more for love of you if only I knew how. My God and my All!"





“My God
and
My All”

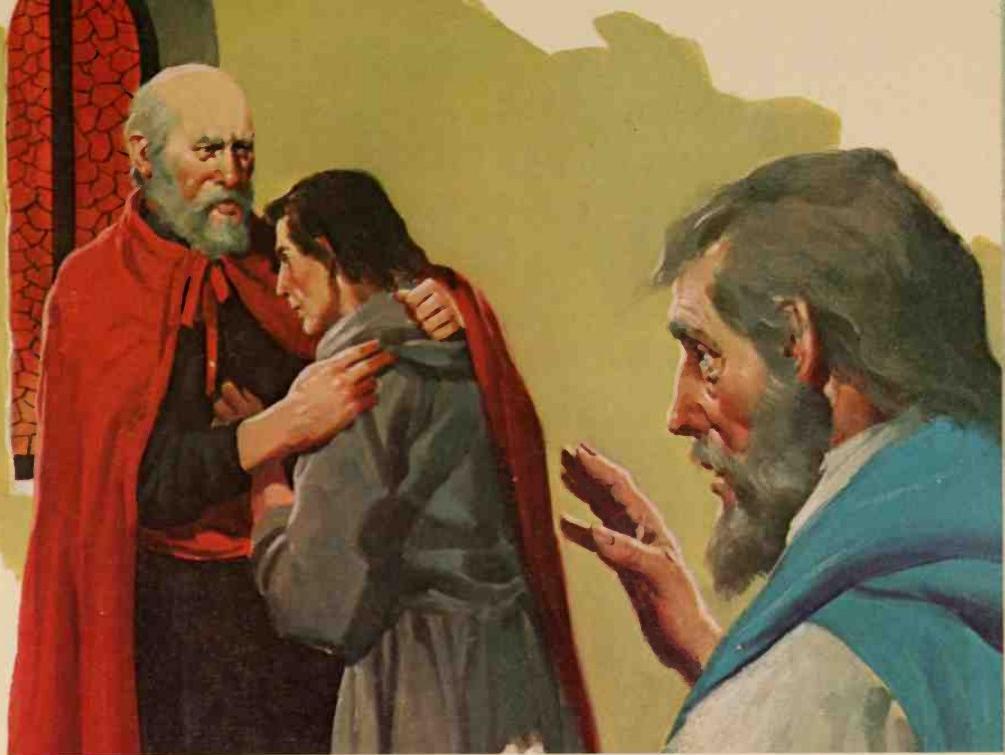
FRANCIS IS TREATED LIKE A CRAZY MAN

ONE day Bernadone's clerk told him that the boys outside were chasing "a crazy man." He was shocked to see that it was Francis.

He saw his son pale and hungry, covered with dirt, and bleeding from the stones thrown at him.

Bernadone seized his son and locked him in a dark cellar at home, giving him only bread and water. When his father went on a trip, Francis was freed by his kind mother.





FRANCIS TAKES GOD AS HIS FATHER

BERNADONE brought Francis before the bishop for trial for having taken his money. Francis gave back all the money and clothes he had.

He said: "Until now I have called Pietro di Bernadone 'father.' From now on I shall not say 'father Pietro di Bernadone,' but 'Our Father, Who art in heaven.' "

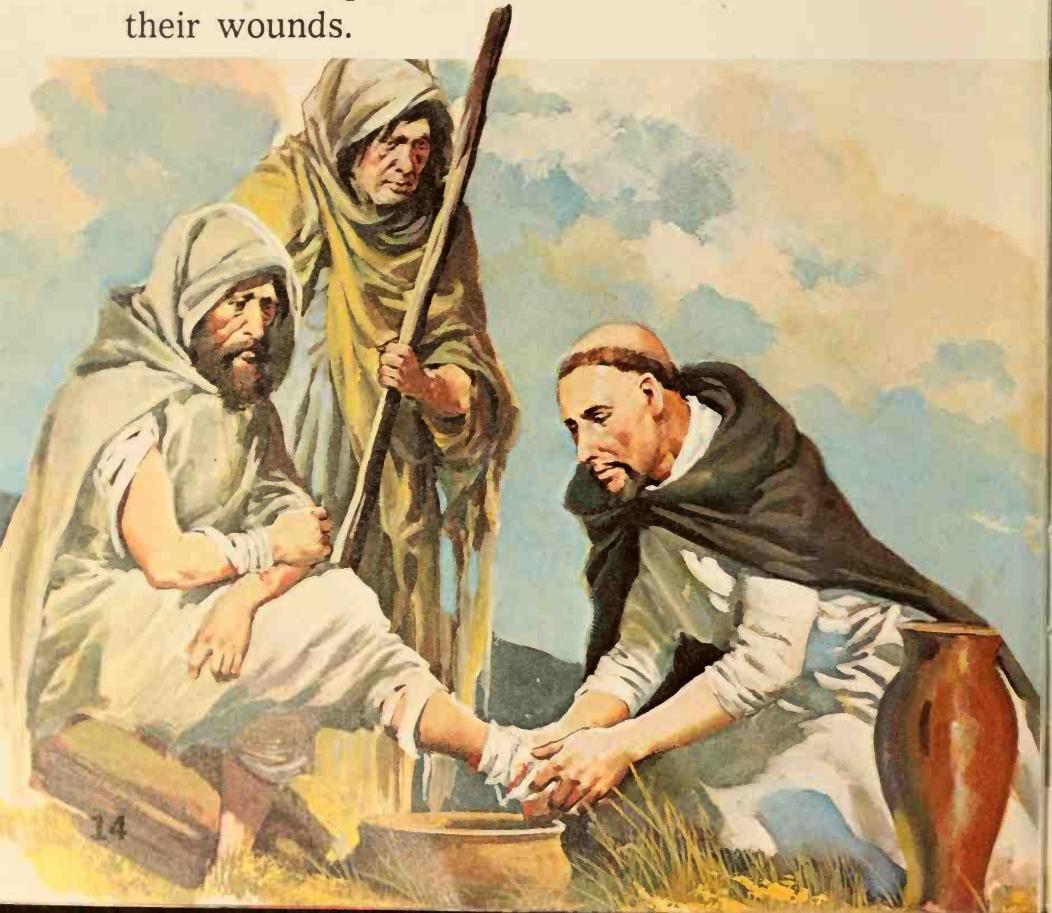
The bishop stepped over to Francis, spread his cape over him, and pressed him to his heart.

FRANCIS WASHES AND NURSES THE SICK

LEAVING town, Francis was manhandled by robbers and rejoiced to suffer for Christ. He then helped out in a monastery kitchen.

Later he reached the town of Gubbio, where a friend gave him a hermit's cloak, a rope to tie around his waist, shoes, and a staff.

Francis spent his time at a hospital, nursing the sick, especially the lepers. He washed their feet, bound up their sores, and often even kissed their wounds.





FRANCIS REPAIRS THE CHURCH OF SAN DAMIANO

FRANCIS returned to San Damiano to repair the Church, and begged for money to do so. Some people laughed at him, but others were moved at such love for God and gave alms.

Francis gathered stones and cemented them himself. He sang as he worked and invited all who passed by to work with him.

Francis realized later that God really wanted him to build His spiritual Church on earth.



FRANCIS PREACHES ABOUT PEACE WITH GOD

FRANCIS appeared on the streets of Assisi in peasant clothes. He greeted everyone with: "The Lord give you peace."

He preached to the crowds that peace was man's greatest good—peace with God by keeping His commandments, peace with others by a kind life, and peace with oneself by having a good conscience.

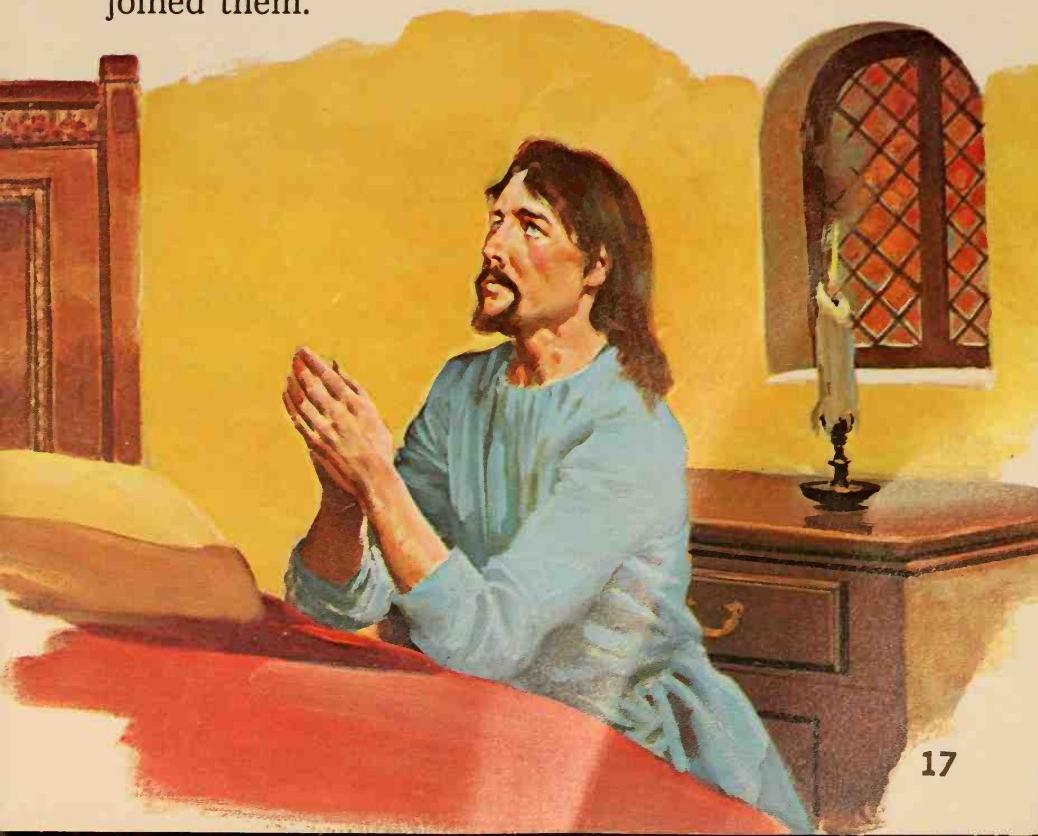
Nobody laughed anymore, and Francis led many people back to peace with God.

THE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF FRANCIS

A PIous merchant from Assisi named Bernard stayed with Francis one night. He saw Francis spend the night in prayer to God and Mary.

In the morning Bernard made up his mind to follow Francis in his new life.

Eight days later, a young man from Assisi named Giles was received into the Brotherhood. Later, Peter, a friend of Francis and Bernard, also joined them.



THE RULE OF SAINT FRANCIS

ONE morning Francis and his companions visited the Church of Saint Nicholas where they prayed to know God's will.

After Mass Francis went up to the altar, opened the Missal, and found the words of the Gospel: "If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

He opened the book a second time and read: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

The third time he opened the book, he read: "And Jesus instructed them to take nothing for their journey."

As Francis closed the book, he turned to his companions and said: "Brothers, this is our life and our Rule, and not only ours, but also theirs who want to live with us."



Then he added: "Let us do what we have heard."

Francis told them: "They are truly friends of peace who, no matter what they have to suffer in the world, still keep peace within and without for love of our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE POPE APPROVES THE RULE OF SAINT FRANCIS

SEVERAL other men joined the group, and all met at the Church of Saint Mary of the Angels.

Francis sent them out two by two to preach the Gospel in the towns around Assisi. They were very simple in their preaching. The words came from their hearts.

At this time, Francis prayed: "O great God of glory, my Lord Jesus Christ, I beg you, put light into the darkness of my mind. Give me the right faith, firm hope, and perfect love. Help me learn to know you, O Lord, that in all things I may do everything according to your holy will."

Wherever the followers of Saint Francis went, people listened to them. Many sinners returned to God through their words.

There were now twelve people in the group. Francis wrote a simple Rule of Life for them



and decided that they must go to Rome to have their Rule approved by the Pope.

At Rome, Pope Innocent III received them with kindness and approved their way of life. He ordered them to preach penance wherever they went.

They returned to Assisi and lived together in a small hut near the town.

SAINT CLARE BECOMES A FOLLOWER OF SAINT FRANCIS

LADY Clare was born of a noble family in Assisi in the year 1194. At the age of sixteen she heard Francis preach in the Church of Saint George.

From that moment she knew that God wanted her to live the kind of life that Francis led. Francis advised her to leave the world and to have no other bridegroom but Jesus.



Clare left her beautiful home and came to Saint Mary of the Angels. Francis and his Brothers were waiting for her with burning torches.

She knelt before Our Lady's image in the little chapel and gave herself to God.

She put on a rough woolen robe and a rope with knots in it. She covered her head and put on sandals.

Clare took three vows of consecration — poverty, chastity, and obedience — and promised to obey Francis as her superior.

She then went to a convent of nuns where she stayed for some time as Sister Clare. Later she came to live at San Damiano with several other Sisters.

Francis told the Sisters: "Come and help me with the work at St. Damian's Church, for it will be a convent of ladies whose good name and life will glorify our Heavenly Father all over the Church."

FRANCIS' LOVE FOR ALL GOD'S CREATURES

FRANCIS was a lover of nature. He believed in a loving Father Who made all things. And he regarded all God's creatures as his brothers and sisters.

He composed a famous poem called the "Canticle of the Sun" in which he praised God for all his creatures.

He thanked Him for our brother the sun, our sister the moon, our brother the wind, our sister water, our brother fire, and for our mother the earth.

Every creature was for Francis a word of God. Each one told us something about God and about ourselves.

Francis once saw a flock of birds in a field. Drawing near, he said: "Praise the Lord, my little sisters!" He talked and they listened.



Francis told them they should be thankful for their food, their sweet voices, their wings, and the other good things God had given them.

At the end of the sermon, he blessed them and they all flew away singing joyfully.

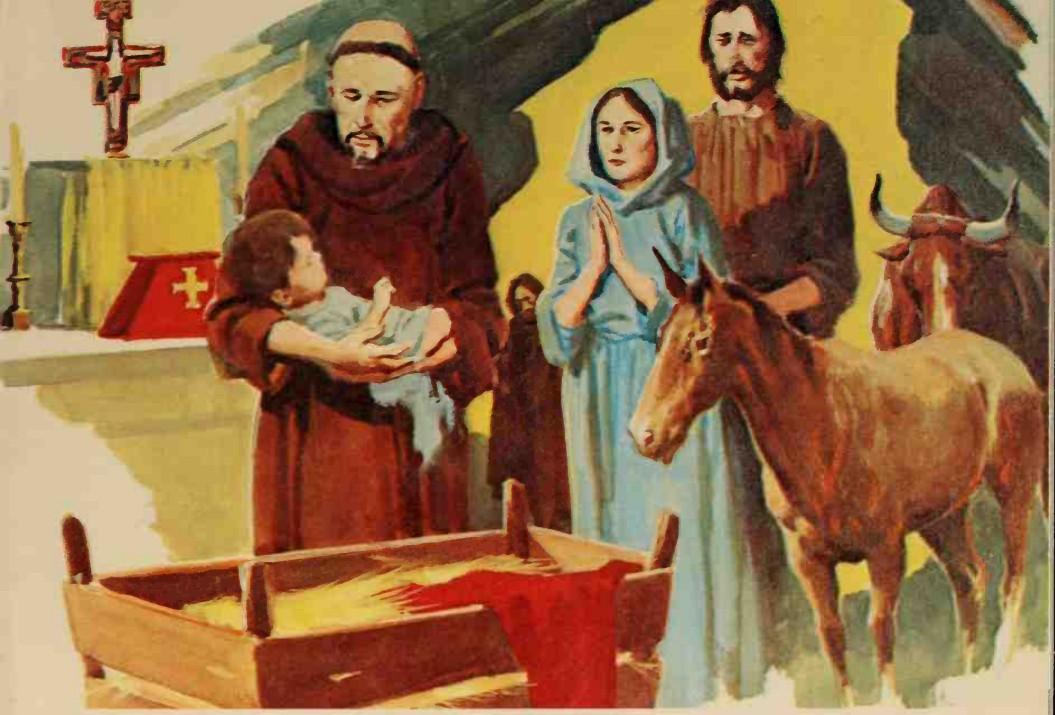


FRIENDSHIP OF FRANCIS AND SAINT DOMINIC

ONE day Francis was going into Saint Peter's Church in Rome when he met Saint Dominic who was coming out. From that moment the Poor Man of Assisi and the founder of the Dominican Order became close friends.

The two men met again at the Church of Saint Mary of the Angels, and one year before Dominic's death they saw each other again in Rome.

On another occasion, Francis entered Siena and found the people fighting in the streets. He spoke to them and the fighting stopped.



FRANCIS AND THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CRIB

FRANCIS also started the Third Order of Penance for those who wished to lead a life of holiness but could not leave their families.

One Christmas Francis invited the people of Greccio for Christmas Mass. Two animals and a manger with straw had been brought into a cave where the Mass was celebrated.

Francis spoke to the people about the birth of Jesus. Afterward, some saw in the manger a little Child asleep, Who woke up when the Saint took Him in his arms.

FRANCIS RECEIVES THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST

FRANCIS often went to Mount Alvernia to fast and pray. Brother Leo, who was a priest, celebrated Mass and gave Communion to Francis in a small cave on the mountainside.

On the feast of the Holy Cross, Francis was praying outside his hut and waiting for the sunrise. He prayed: "O Lord Jesus Christ, I beg you to give me two graces before I die: first, that in my lifetime I may feel in my body and soul as far as I can the pain you felt in the hour of your bitter suffering; and second, that I may feel in my heart the love by which you, O Son of God, were willing to accept such cruel sufferings for us sinners."

He saw a vision of an angel carrying the image of Jesus on the Cross, and his soul was filled with Divine love. When the vision ended, he found that his hands, feet, and side had the five wounds of Jesus.

Francis said nothing about this. But the Brothers found blood on his clothes when they went to the wash, and they knew that he had Our Lord's wounds on his body.



BEFORE HIS DEATH, FRANCIS BLESSES ASSISI

FRANCIS became ill and was near death. He asked to be carried down from the town of Assisi to the Church of Saint Mary of the Angels.

On the way, he asked to be turned toward Assisi. With his half-blind eyes he stared for a long time at the town. Then he blessed it with the words: "God has chosen you to give honor to His Name!"

The Brothers carried Francis to the Church where he wanted to die.

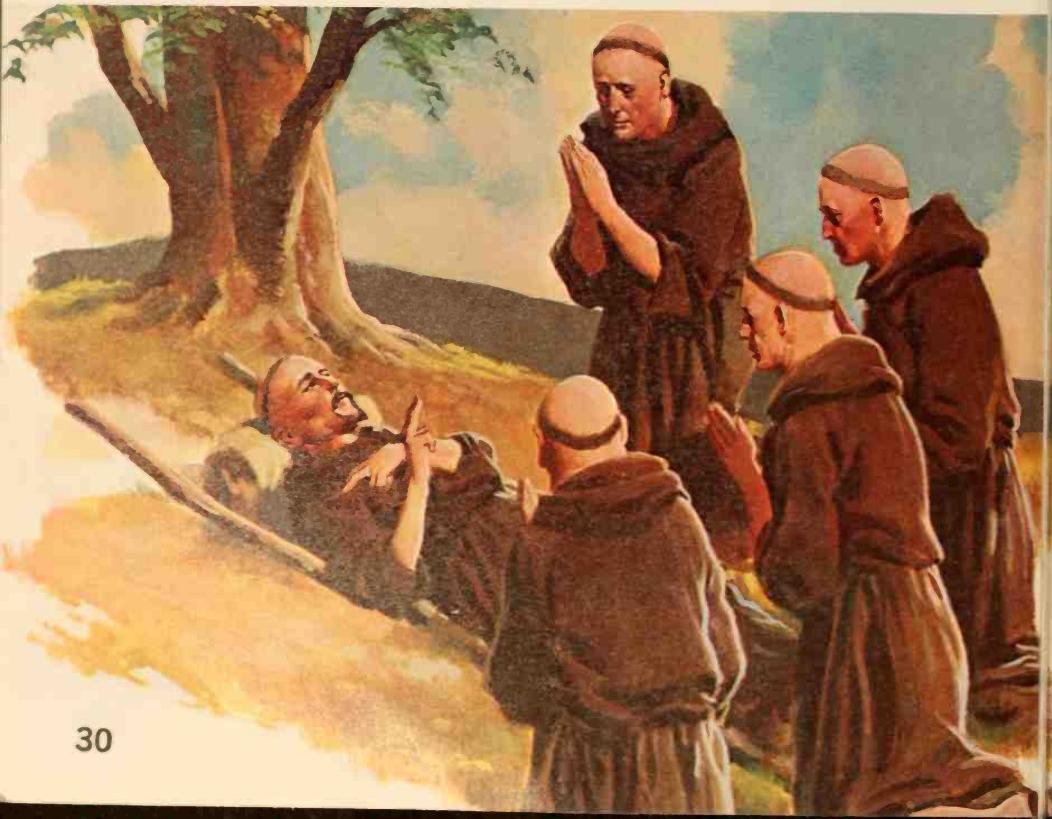
DEATH OF SAINT FRANCIS

AFTER making his preparations for his "Sister Death" and saying his farewells, Francis began to sing Psalm 141:

"I cry to the Lord. Bring my soul out of prison, O Lord, that I may praise Your Name." Francis of Assisi closed his lips forever; he went into eternity singing.

Saint Francis died October 4, 1226.

As a final greeting to the devoted singer of God's praises, his good friends the larks came to sing their last farewell.





BURIAL OF SAINT FRANCIS

FRANCIS' body was taken first to San Damiano so that the Sisters who had joined Clare as his followers could see him for the last time.

Then a crowd of people, carrying torches and olive branches, brought the body into Assisi to the Church of Saint George. Later his remains were transferred to the Church of Saint Francis, which thousands still visit every year.

The whole Church celebrates the Feast of Saint Francis on October 4.

PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

LORD, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, let me sow pardon.
Where there is friction, let me sow union.
Where there is error, let me sow truth.
Where there is doubt, let me sow faith.
Where there is despair, let me sow hope.
Where there is darkness, let me sow light.
Where there is sadness, let me sow joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.



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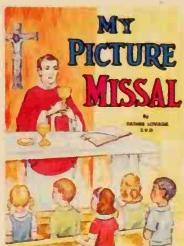
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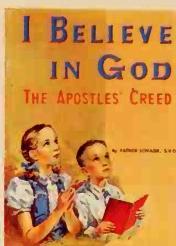
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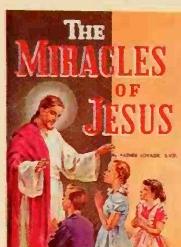
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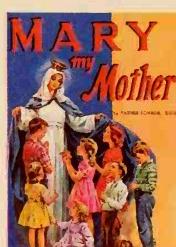
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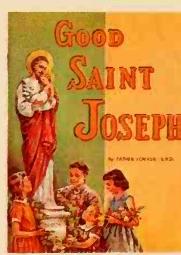
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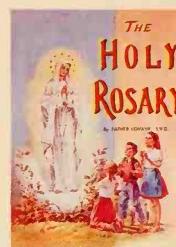
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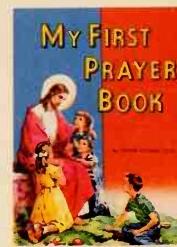
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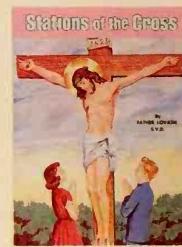
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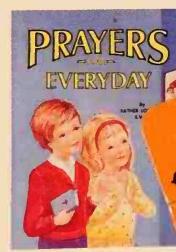
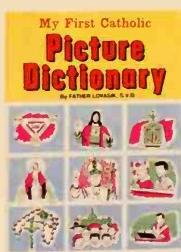
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